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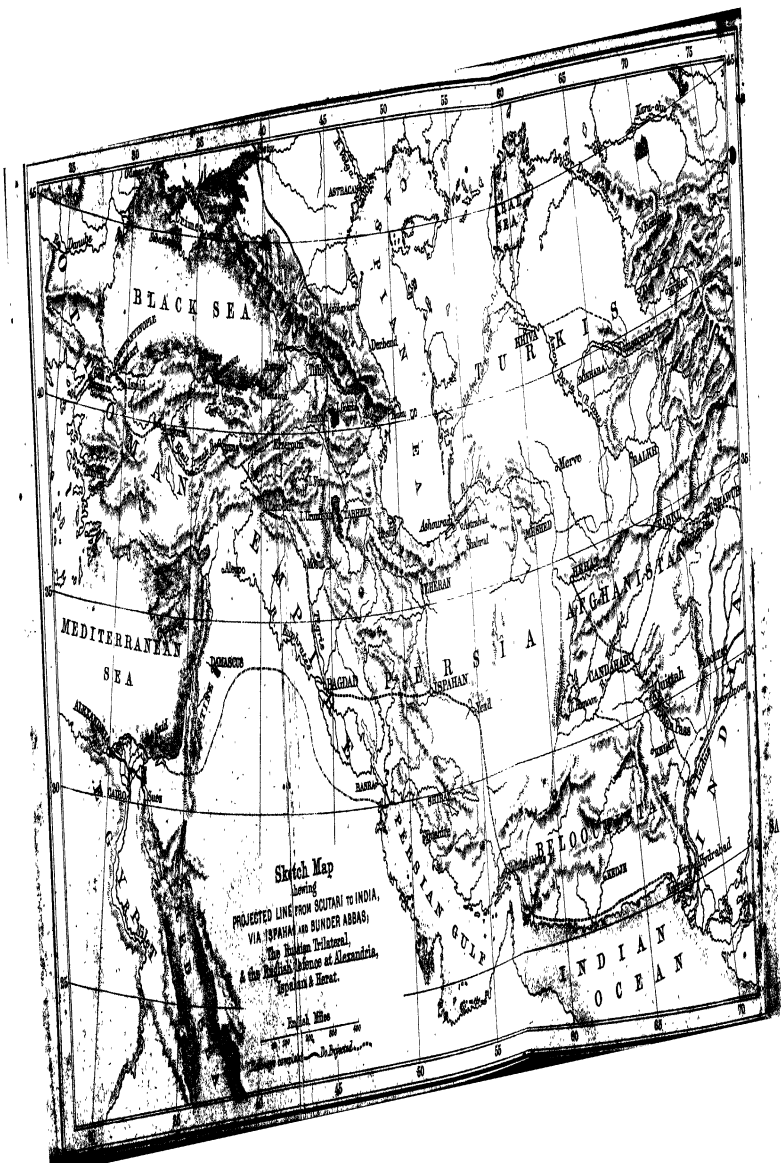












# THE POLICY OF ENGLAND

IN RELATION TO

## INDIA AND THE EAST ;

OR,

ALEXANDRIA,

ISPAHAN,

HERAT.

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BY

J. A. PARTRIDGE.

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"As FROM THE THRONE OF HEAVEN,"

*Burke.*

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London

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## PREFACE.

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“One can only destroy by replacing.”—NAPOLEON I.

WHERE there are conflicting interests and powers there must be “questions,” and when a question has for ages been specially localized, it does not do suddenly and simply to tell us that its place knows it no more. We want to know whether it *has* gone, and if so, whither, and why?

There are in fact at present two Eastern questions. The first is the more intense, the second is the more important. The first is, What to do and avoid at Constantinople? the second is, What are the main strategic points for defence

and (necessarily) for offence in relation to our Indian and Australian empires?

And the second question is part of two others, each more important than the *direct* question at Constantinople. The one is of that Imperial Britannic Confederation without which we can hope neither to compete with other powers, nor to organize our own: the other is that of our mighty unknown future in India.

The *strategic* connexion between these two questions is the Suez Canal; and those who maintain that Constantinople has nothing to do with our confederated or with our Indian Empire, have to maintain one of two things; either that a hostile power at Constantinople could not strike with tremendous vantage and effect at the Suez thoroughfare, or else, that a difference of weeks between opposing or supporting powers is in warfare a matter of no importance!

The Eastern question in Europe used (amongst

other things) to be, what in case of war could we do against Russia along the Black Sea and Azov coasts; and latterly a question has there arisen (especially since the projected railways from Scutari eastwards), of possible action against her bases about the Caspian. *Our* communications were not in question. The tables are turned now, and the European-Eastern question is not so much of Russian communications, *but our own*. In a word the question is "Suez."

It is therefore important that Englishmen prepare themselves while considering the question at Constantinople, *to consider it wholly and in all its parts*—not as a Turkish or Russian question, but *as an Imperial English question*.

The common sense of Englishmen tells them that the real Eastern question has not vanished, for England, Australia, and India have not vanished, nor have the waterways and straits betwixt them.

The common sense of Englishmen tells them that there is and must be an Eastern question, inasmuch as we have not only India to protect, but Australia to communicate with: it tells them that Russia is the likeliest and the only apparent foe to attack India: it tells them that the Mediterranean end of the Canal is, if not the only, the fatalest place at which she could strike—and that striking there at Indian, she cannot but strike also at Australian communications: it tells them that we must be ready not only to parry but to anticipate that blow; and it tells them therefore that we have to complain somewhat of the cowardice, the ignorance, or the prudery of statesmen, who have failed to set these things and their inevitable issues plainly before Parliament or the People.

There is and there must be an Eastern question in which we have a great deal to do, to acquire, and to avoid, and in and for the doing of which

we have abundant warrant, and shall have abundant reward.

All serious politicians—all men capable of considering English interests as a whole, and of working for them as citizens, are indeed making up their minds about the Eastern question. The time is ripe. With the Suez Canal the last factor in that great question was completed, and it is one that directly concerns us, not only in Australia and India, but in Egypt, and in trade as well as in citizenship and empire.

Materials of statesmanship respecting the policy, strategy, and commerce of Britain involved in the Eastern question are now so patent to the world; Central Asia is now so adequately explored and mapped, and Russian policy is laid so utterly bare, following, as it does, the inevitable strategic lines of conquest, nor halting, although pretending to halt, as it nears the imminent deadly breach of affront and defiance of our power; that it seems

to me about the best service a British citizen can render his fellows to endeavour to popularize the knowledge of such of these facts as are undoubted, to explain the common-sense manifest meaning of the Russian advance, to propose the obvious test which alone can acquit her of direct designs against India, and to show how impregnable is our position there if we do our duty, and how tentative may be the doing of it if begun now. And, above all and crowning all, how the whole line of our Anglo-Indian strategy suddenly becomes connected, continuous, and complete as by a revelation, when, at the critical moment for Asia and India a waterway is created, which places us on the flank of the Russian advance—which transfers the battle to our own element should our own advance be challenged this side of the Persian Gulf,—which bestows on us the vicinage, and gives us the option of a Mohammedan alliance hard by India, and shows the

Turkish alliance to be unnecessary just as it is proved to be infamous.

This is no alarmist or costly policy. Nature and science, and the processes that preside over the dissolution as well as the establishment of States, unite in the guarantee that no foe need threaten us from Constantinople until we have become invulnerable to his blows. The dissolution of the Ottoman-Empire would be the solution of the Egyptian question, and the maintenance of Turkey or the substitution for her of a new and free community would fix a new friend or an old one on the Bosphorus, and bar it against Russia in case of war. It is difficult even to imagine a settlement of the Turkish question that would not either defend the Canal at Constantinople, or else confer on us a preferential moral claim to such part of Egypt as we choose to take, *except a settlement* that should perpetuate Turkish rottenness in the neighbourhood of Russian power, or



such political hypocrisy and suicide as should give Russia the freedom of the seas, whilst denying to Christian communities in Turkey freedom of any sort—even to exist and to combine for their own advantage.

We can save Turkey from the Turks without incurring the loss of India; and the very same political events which may render it necessary to acquire Egypt, will also remove from our path moral difficulties, the only ones before which we should quail. The science which suggested and completed the Suez Canal marches with the civilization that will use it, and both work together with events elsewhere. How true is Humboldt's great saying that the Government and the history of the world can alone explain one another!

I hope that I discuss this question without prejudice as without fear. Here is no problem recondite or profound. It is plain enough to have defied everything but the professional

muddling and mystification of idlers who have unfortunately been talkers too, and who, not having learnt, cannot teach in the spirit of Hudibras' motto,—

“He knew what's what, and that's as high  
As metaphysic wit can fly.”

This is no question of unknown quantities, or of obscure inferences, or of a balance of authorities. From the state of certain countries, and the position of certain towns, rivers, mountains, straits, and passes, ascertainable with absolute certainty by any one anxious to know, we can all infer with safety certain results which are matter, not of authority, but of argument, which any man can test. To alter the problem one must obliterate these places from the map, and their qualities from the gazetteer, for none can doubt the facts, and given the facts, it is difficult to dispute the conclusions.

As will be gathered from these pages, we can

*depend* on no line through Constantinople and Scutari. We *must* have a line along which, under any reasonable conditions, we can make good a passage for troops.

The Constantinople line will not do, because it might be vetoed by almost any one European power; because our negotiations, with at least four European powers, must be complete before we could be sure of being allowed to begin to defend our Indian Empire, and by that time <sup>the</sup> said Empire might be lost; because of the double embarkation and landing; because such a line will soon conduct us past a great trunk line of Russia at Tiflis and Tabreez, in direct and far shorter communication with St. Petersburg, and at an equal remove from English and Indian supports; because Tabreez and the line itself would be in the hands of the Russians before we could have got to the Danube.

No! we must be able to reach the Persian

# THE POLICY OF ENGLAND,

IN RELATION TO

## INDIA, AND THE EAST.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE EASTERN QUESTION IN EUROPE.

"I think<sup>2</sup> I can trace all the calamities of this country to the single source of our not having had steadily before our eyes a general, comprehensive, well connected, and well proportioned view of the whole of our dominions, and a just sense of their true bearings and relations."

BURKE.

"Asia will not, of course, ever form the avowed object of dispute between England and Russia, but in the event of a war, we shall clearly be obliged to take advantage of the proximity to India afforded by our present position in Central Asia. . . . Our power of threatening British India has become real, and ceased to be visionary."

CAPTAIN TERENTYEFF, *Russia and England in the East.*

To establish and foster on the banks of the Bosphorus a strong and virile community which

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shall be our natural ally against its overbearing neighbour, which shall in case of war admit us into the Black Sea and exclude the enemy from the Mediterranean, thus protecting our communications at Suez and threatening his with the Caspian; and to acquire in the immediate neighbourhood of the Canal the best base for its defence we honourably can—this seems to me to be all of the Eastern question, whether as regards our duty to ourselves or to our neighbour, that there really is in Europe.

But if, as a preliminary, we should join Russia in demanding effectual guarantees for the performance of Turkish promises, and those guarantees (however irrelevant to Indian questions) should become in our hands guarantees also against the executors of Peter's will, who could help admitting the usefulness or admiring the irony of the situation! <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Concerning these great alternatives, a community

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There is no controversy about the facts of the Eastern question. There is an absolute consensus respecting them, and the latest observers—Vámbéry, Baker, Schuyler, and Burnaby—use almost the same words in describing the opportunities of the crisis and the urgency for British action. The main difference is—first, that each succeeding traveller describes Russia as hundreds of miles in advance of some predecessors' observations, and bewails new opportunities seized by her and lost by us; and, secondly, that the Suez Canal is a new and unknown quantity, not only in the Indo-Russian, but in European, Mediterranean, Persian, and African questions.

No man can rightly understand *a part* only of

organizing, or a confederacy superseding, the Moslem power, see Vámbéry and others. "I too have been engaged for some years in practical and theoretical inquiries on the subject, and I have found the West Asiatic world not at all wanting in vitality, and especially not because it is Mohammedan."

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a great question. What I have done is to bring the parts together, in order to consider how they bear on that great whole called Anglo-Eastern policy, the arena of which stretches from Malta to the Ganges, and concerns every interest between.

I endeavour to show—1st, What is Anglo-Eastern policy. 2nd, What it is not. 3rd, How peaceful the nature of that policy really is—how tentative in its efforts—how desirable, and even imperative, in the interests of trade and commerce—how strong in its tendency to remove the causes which create war—how it puts and leaves the onus of any warlike move upon Russia, who would then be able to attack us only at a considerable moral and material disadvantage.

“Is it reasonable,” we are asked, “to suppose that Russia will attack British India?” The answer to this question depends on the answers to two others—first, Has she the will? and, secondly, Has she the power? The answer to the first

question is, that the will of nations is moved by self-interest, and *that*, amongst political complications, may at any moment dispose any nation to attack any other. The only reasonable question, therefore, is this, "Does Russia possess, or can she acquire, *the power* to attack us successfully in India?"

Now, taking for granted England's continued indifference and inaction in Central Asia, it is difficult to see what elements of power for such successful invasion Russia can want that she does not already possess, except time and opportunity. This may seem a hard saying, but it is easy and plain enough to any man who will take time to examine a few facts thoroughly and judge them fairly. I say it is a question, first of all, whether England will or will not act—whether she will or will not take *now* the few easy, but momentous steps necessary to assure herself the victory. And to this end will she, can she learn in time,



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that whatever duties we have at Constantinople, that city, although part of the Eastern question, is not now, and never again can be, its key. As long as the Suez Canal remains open, how can the fate of India depend upon a city some 1200 miles *west* of the Eastern question, and also of Russia's best base of operations against India?

To curb Russian ambition is one thing, to maintain in the fairest and most commanding position of the earth, at a great cost of money and character, a nation bankrupt in both, is quite another thing. In doing the first, not only are we bound not to do the last, but we are bound to do the direct contrary. We are bound, if we interfere at all, to interfere *so* as that equal and just laws shall prevail in those regions.

In the natural course of things Turkish rule would be extinguished. If we, in the interests of a bad government, suspend *vi et armis* the natural Nemesis and law of Providence against that

*The Eastern Question in Europe.* 7

government, we are bound also, in the interests of the people, to suspend by force the bad results of that bad government.

If we suspend the beneficent action of nature in destroying Turkish rule, we must also suspend the action of that infamous and maleficent nature which is of the very essence of Turkish rule.

In fine, we have now two grand opportunities—first, of establishing a strong and just confederation; and, next, by the essential results of that act, of curbing perhaps for ever, any mischievous activity of Russia on the Bosphorus or the Mediterranean. If, however, we fail to do the first, we shall not only fail to do the last, but we shall do the exact contrary; and as we cannot establish a strong and self-supporting confederacy, capable of withstanding Russian ambition if we allow Russia to appropriate those strategic lines which are the material guarantees of empire, we must do one of two things—*either*

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*guarantee to the world a just government on Turkish soil, and guarantee to that government the integrity of its material dominion, or else wash our hands of the whole concern. True, the former process may be tentative and gradual, but the purpose must be resolute and the plan clear.*

Vast interests for many years depend on the soundness of our work now in Turkey. The situation comes to us as choice, but will return as destiny. If to cripple Russia be our great object, and a just and strong confederacy be only our pretence, then on the next occasion Russia's right will be increased tenfold, as her opportunity may be far more favourable.

This is another of those great epochs in which we are charged by destiny and God with a mighty and enduring world-work. Ultimate victory depends on duty done. Failure to do it charges the future with the thunderbolt of coming doom, and directly points it against

ourselves. When, therefore, we are asked to fight Russia for possession of Constantinople, because *that* will directly protect our Indian Empire, we must remember that to justify such a proposal, one should possess a considerable knowledge of the strategy of three continents, and a thorough knowledge of the political, commercial, and strategical relations of Russia, India, and England.

At the first view to allege that Russia requires Constantinople as a basis against India, when she already has a basis on the Caspian, were the last absurdity in politics. Having already a basis comparatively next door to the most assailable openings in the defences of India, Russia can hardly be charged with the wish to challenge a war which might or might not end in establishing a basis at the furthest possible distance from those openings.

An English war for Constantinople, conducted

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on ordinary calculations of sanity, can only mean that were Russia possessed of Constantinople, she could menace at enormous disadvantage to ourselves, our *Indian communications at Suez*, because we should never think of going to war to-day with Russia, in order to prevent her striking at us with even chances at some vague future time or place.

The ultimate question therefore is, "What could Russia do if she possessed Constantinople?" and we will endeavour to answer that question, giving her supposed power and malignity the benefit of every doubt, and making the worst of them that we fairly can.

To suppose Russia at Constantinople with free egress permitted to the vessels, whether of peace or war of all nations, will not do. It would not be bad enough. We must suppose that she bars the passage—that having spent many years and men, and much treasure in opening the

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passage, she is prepared to spend much more in closing it.

Well, and supposing she succeeded, we are not inside the Bosphorus. We don't "want to get out," and can do without getting in. But then there is that dreadful "wet-dock" theory. Russia might make the Black Sea a vast wet-dock, in which to construct, in secret, an enormous fleet, and whence to launch it at—we presume—our ships for Suez.

To this supposition there are three answers :—  
First, Where is the money for this fleet to come from? Secondly, What would have become of the Danubian powers? Would Austro-Hungary be a partner in the wet-dock company? Could Russia carry it out without war with other powers besides Britain? And would Russia prepare for a war *à l'outrance* against Great Britain, by defying and injuring other powers, and exhausting her own treasury? Thirdly, the disso-

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lution of the Turkish Empire must precede all this, and would be itself the solution of the Suez difficulty. Then we should already have arranged with Egypt, and be comfortably settled at Alexandria.

But there is the necessity of the Moslem name, and influence, and sympathy, working Indiawards in our favour. Why, what would be the facts? Russia and Britain contend for the sympathies of Indian Mussulmen. The former has destroyed the Western Mohammedans, and the latter has simply not helped them. How then has Russia bettered her chances? Could she appeal to India thus:—"We nobly cut your brethren's throats in Europe, and England stood basely by. Allah il Allah! God is great! Let us embrace, and drive the islanders into the sea!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The statistical abstract gives the population of British India as 190,000,000, amongst whom are 139,000,000 Hindoos, and 41,000,000 only Mohammedans.

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Moslem sympathies are a good thing, but in the case supposed, they will not be with Russia, and there are Moslems in Persia whose alliance may bar the passage of Russia, not through the Bosphorus which ought to be free, but over the immemorial Persian frontier, the only ready road of Russia Indiawards. That alliance would be as Moslem as the Turkish, it would not seek to stifle the Black Sea life and trade, or to deny the freedom of the seas to spite Russia, and it would act for Anglo-Persian trade, and against Russian, and for Indian strategy and trade.

But the broad, common-sense issues of the future should suffice to discredit for ever this idea of blockading Russia in a close sea. The future cannot consist with entrusting the key of two continents to a retrograde power, for the purpose not of opening a free promenade for all peoples, but of making a prison-



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house of a mighty river and a great sea, and constituting a little power gaoler over a great one.

The Eastern question which concerns Englishmen is clearly not one between Slavic propagandism and Moslem decadence, vast as those questions are. England did her devoir once on the side of the Turk because she thought Turkey was on the side of freedom; because our own heart was hot with the memories of '48; because we saw at Sebastopol the destroyer of Polish life as well as the assassin of Hungarian liberty, and we hoped that even through the diplomatic Nessus shirt of nationalities some blow might be struck against Russia, and reach, perchance, Austria—the coward and the murderer—as she sat lusting and lurking by!

Now, however, the question has wider and truer issues: one epoch of the Anglo-Eastern question closes and another opens. Hitherto

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isolation has been the condition on which we have held India, and latterly avoidance of responsibility has been the key to our policy amongst the tribes that beset its gates. Now all this is changed and changing. We must accept responsibility or defeat; we must control the strategy of Merv, Herat, and Quittah; we must connect them by railways with their Indian base, or let Russia connect them with hers; we must support or continue to desert Persia in her struggle against Russia for trade, frontier, and existence; we must support the Persian frontier against Russia, or let the latter absorb it and threaten us from Merv and Herat; we must defend the Suez Canal in the best way possible, or risk the loss of our communications with India.

But all these things are the reverse of isolation; they are, in fact, but different modes of connecting Indian and Persian interests, and

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India itself, with the Mediterranean and with Europe.

Napoleon attacked Egypt because his prescience told him that *there* lay the issues of the future. He struck at the real mark; but the battle of the Nile reversed French successes on shore, and wrested the keys of the East from the only hands that could have held them against us.

Another battle of the Nile—fought for the thoroughfare of Suez—may settle, some day, in Europe, the Indian question. Malta is too far from the entrance to the Canal to be its first line of defence; and, if England remain an Indian power at all, she should be able—before Russia holds Constantinople—to hold and to fortify Alexandria, so as to defy—if not all the navies of the world, at least any two of them. One of the things we cannot do is to allow our ships of war to be attacked singly as they come in or go

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out of the Suez Canal; and Alexandria is the nearest place that can shelter a fleet and back it with a sufficiently formidable position. We have said, "If England remain an Indian power at all," but should we not have said, "a power anywhere"? for where would be England's power if we were beaten out of our own element, and not allowed to protect our mightiest dependency?

## CHAPTER II.

## CONSTANTINOPLE AND ALEXANDRIA.

"If we make ourselves too little for the sphere of our duty; if, on the contrary, we do not stretch and expand our minds to the compass of their object, be well assured that everything about us will dwindle by degrees, until at length our concerns are shrunk to the dimensions of our minds."—BURKE.

IN the long-run, permanent and natural forces will dominate temporary and spasmodic ones. The thoroughfare will follow—and not control—the main issue, which is the character of the community on its banks, and how it can organize, use, and replenish the country we call Turkey.

Constantinople is part, and not the whole, of the Eastern question. If we can constitute there

*Constantinople and Alexandria.* 19

a strong state, it becomes at once, and naturally, our first line of defence—or even of attack—for India. It may safeguard Suez; it may become part of a formidable anti-Russian confederation; it may check Russian aggression from every corner of the Black Sea. But to look first to the thoroughfare, and after that to the nation on its banks, is to enfeeble, to temporise, and to deceive.

Our right and proper basis for defence is, however, the Canal and its communications, which should become in our hands impregnable. Of this necessity I have taken Alexandria as the symbol. And Alexandria, Ispahan, and Herat are here used as words representative and symbolic of the part to be played by English policy in Egypt, Persia, and Afghanistan, respectively, in that greater chain of Mohammedan powers, destined, possibly—under English tutelage—to occupy, replenish, and organize

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Southern Asia as far as the borders of China; and who, if they are to have a future, may at least from Scutari to the Sarakhs, be one day federated in the bonds of race, faith, and material interests, against Northern aggression.

Although there are obvious reasons of climate, sea, and river, of national and international policy, and of nature herself, why Russia is not likely permanently to possess the Balkan peninsula, yet, all the more for those very reasons, would one reprobate an attempt to restrict Russia, by treaty, from the free use of the great thoroughfare between Europe and Asia. Moreover, Russia is not the only power that can threaten us; and the communications of a great empire should be beyond suspicion, doubt, or fear.

But however difficult to deprive Constantinople of her primacy of position, it is partly done.

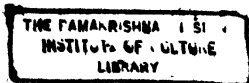
True, the map tells us how Russia seeks that

*Constantinople and Alexandria.* 21

peerless site—not only for what it would enable her to do, *but for what it would enable her to prevent others from doing.* Russia has virtually established a base on the southern coast of the Caspian, and the holder of Constantinople could, on the one hand, strike—or prevent others from striking—at her communications with that base; and, on the other, strike—or prevent others from striking at—our communications with India, either at Suez or in the Euphrates valley.

True, also, that the Russian route to India is far too uncertain and difficult by the lines of the Oxus or Yaxartes to compete with that of the Attrek, and the only direction in which it was possible to strike at her communications with the Caspian was by way of the Black Sea.

Now, however, the Persian Gulf carries away the palm from the Black Sea, and unless Russia





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can stop us at Suez, we have—all things considered, and amongst them the probable railways from Bagdad and Bunder Abbas to Ispahan, and thence to Teheran and the northern frontier of Persia—a likelier, a safer, a swifter, and a more certain means of paralyzing Russia's arm should she ever venture to strike that way at India.

Let us do our English work on Turkey honestly; if at all. It seems to be to convoy that country towards a future of order, civilization, and safety; and let Russia come out if she will, into the open, and contend with us where, when, and how she can or dare.

For a special reason, or for temporary reasons, we may shut her up within her seas; but in the broad future, if Russia is strong enough to supersede Turkey, she will hold that and the thoroughfare as well; if not, the power that does hold them will hold them against Russian aggression, and in this shape the question returns,—“is there, after

all, an Eastern question in the Mediterranean, at the western entrance to the Suez Canal? If, as is unquestionable, the Canal has altered the strategy of Europe and Asia, may there not be attempts made to alter *that*? If the Thermopylæ of India is there, are we not to consider ourselves—as *what we are*—the responsible guardians of the civilization of Asia, Africa, and Australia, and as such shall we take no thought of the morrow, of the day when the navies of the world may contend for the passage? Surely that upon which the issues of the world depend should have for its defence the best guarantees the world can afford!

“Well,” say some, “neutralize the Canal;” but no neutralization of the Canal would avail that cannot be extended to the ocean, and to something more extensive and irrepressible still—human nature itself.

“Seal,” say others, “the Bosphorus,” to

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which I answer, first, war breaks such seals; secondly, such a seal would call for war to break it; thirdly, such a seal kills commerce, and with it the interests of peace and its guarantees; fourthly, Russia is but one naval Power, and it is conceivable that she may be friendly; for, lastly, a sound policy will find us so strong in the East, that there is no reason why we and Russia should not be friends. She can fulfil all legitimate ambitions without offence against us, and possibly with our favour. What is the use of a policy that intensifies and perpetuates hatred till it is set aside—that can be set aside at any moment, and that is a guarantee, as far as it goes, not against war but against peace?

Of two things, one, Russia will be seated at Constantinople or she will not. In the first case, the Turkish Empire will be dissolved, and Egypt will belong more to us than to any other power; in the second, if a power friendly to

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ourselves holds the Bosphorus, war with England would bar the passage against Russia.

But it is conceivable that Constantinople and its waters may be neutralized, or that some power hostile to England may hold them, and desire to open them.

• We have, therefore, to be prepared for any of five possible cases. First and second, Russia, or some other foe, in possession of the Bosphorus. Third and fourth, its neutralization, or the neutrality of the possessing powers. Fifth, a friend in possession who would desire to close the passage against Russia.

In the first and second cases we must be prepared to protect the Canal *otherwise* than by ~~the~~ closing the Bosphorus. In the third and fourth, the same result follows. The fifth case would be favourable, but not decisive in our favour; we should depend on treaties and coalitions, and a

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balance of power, and should not stand on our own ground or depend on our own right arm.

Thus no one of the five probable and possible cases, guarantees (from the point of view at Constantinople) the Canal even against Russia; and supposing Russia provided against, there remain all the other powers.

I contend, therefore, that to attempt to close the Bosphorus needlessly exasperates Russia, denies the principle of freedom of the seas, and would effect nothing permanent or decisive for England.

Again, and more emphatically, I say Constantinople is not the European-Eastern question, and Suez is that question.

Two others remain—first, Are we doing or going to do anything at Constantinople that may prevent our acquiring command of Suez in case of need? Secondly, Are we going to do anything towards peacefully, righteously, and honourably

acquiring that command? If we are not doing the latter, woe be to us as a nation, for ours will be not only the eternal disgrace of the Cabinet, but the definitive defeat so far of that which would benefit our nation, all nations, and civilization itself.

We cannot, therefore, attempt to seal up Russia in the Black Sea, because she might try to seal us up at Suez. Such policy would settle nothing, and appears unworthy alike of the English name, power, policy, and antecedents. If we want perpetual war, this is the policy that will insure it—nay, may not Russia now be determined to push and settle this question at all hazard, save that of war with Prussia? Is it not certain that now Turks are weak and Turkey disorganized, Russia is prepared to defy all powers, save Prussia, in the struggle for this thing so necessary to her life and destiny. And are we the nation to deny Russia the principle of the

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freedom of the seas because she may misapply that for which we have always contended?

And if the necessity of the case cannot be met by a policy that not only defies Russia, but contemplates the decay of all the Black Sea region, how is it to be met? The neutralization of the Canal were in itself an excellent achievement; but the question is, what is to prevent our ships from being assailed, one by one, as they pass in or out, and, as we have shown, neutralization were itself neuter unless it included the waters outside as well as inside the Canal? The only thing that can protect our ships is our navy, and the question returns only in an advanced stage, "Ought we not to secure a port, an arsenal, and a fortress hard by that exit? Nay, must we not be the power possessing the *nearest* nucleus of offence and defence thereto? Are we to take the best means to prevent such an attack, or to decide it in our own favour if attempted?" In

other words, are we to pursue a policy of self-preservation and of empire when squaring accounts, as we now must do, with Turkey and Egypt—countries whose governments owe to us their very existence several times over, and could not exist without us now?

Alexandria will be held soon by somebody, and that somebody will certainly not be the Sultan, who works for barbarism, or the Khedive, who works for usury. If that somebody be not England, it will be "somebody, not ourselves, who works for barbarism." Egypt is gone on tick to England. The owners of Egypt are not now the Khedive or the Sultan. Their creditors are the owners to the extent, at least, of many shillings in the pound, or, if it be said the people are really the owners—that is our argument. Our missionaries, travellers, soldiers, merchants, our financiers, and even our chiefs of the Exchequer, have done the work in Africa,



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and have rendered her future possible—these others have only taken the tribute of Egypt. Could any more immoral thing be, than that modern Egypt, *the people*, should be ground down to pay tribute to one who can neither fight for them, pay them, teach them, govern them, or organize them, and who is besides, geographically disconnected with their country ? We have practically a lien, political, financial, philanthropic, and our Suzerainty would only add order, power, and guarantees. A Czar once said to us, "Take Egypt," and if we are not now or soon forced to take his advice and Egypt too, as far as Cairo, we must at least have the best possible guarantees for the best possible road to India. The Canal can be defended at either end by our navy, and if it have to be defended in the middle or all along its banks, we could defend it with greater advantage than any other power could attack it. A Euphrates valley railway for instance, besides

*Constantinople and Alexandria.* 31

its great unhealthiness and double embarkation, would be almost as open to attacks as the one projected from Scutari, whereas *viâ* the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf, we remain on our own element, and are landed hard by the heart of Persia herself, our necessary ally. There we can conciliate as well as command, and the route is further from our foes, and far less easily obstructed.

Russia is capable of doing a mighty civilizing work in Northern Asia, and is the only power that can organize those regions, but ours is the great world-work of the future, of individuality, of freedom, of representative and constitutional life. As we work for, we must work with three Continents, and mindful of our new duties, we may leave Slavic Russia to German and Hungarian consideration, save where we could intervene decisively in favour of human and Christian rights. In presence of the mighty future set

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before us by Providence on this vast stage, *we must give an eternal go-bye* to mere quarrels between one tyrant who organizes a strong military despotism, and another who organizes a weak voluptuous one. We must expand our minds to the dimensions of the sphere of our duties, and speak and act there to the utmost of our power and occasion, "as from the very throne of Heaven ! "

And how are opportunity and power at one with duty? Who has equal power on the seas? Who in the Mediterranean? Who so great a stake in Egypt or Suez? It is a grave question to be thoroughly and fearlessly answered, for it *has* to be answered. Is the right with the Khedive, a citizen and a debtor of the world, with Bond-street lacquer and Capel Court equipments, who at the cost of English creditors, has just sent his Africans to cut the throats of Europeans? And the Sultan his suzerain? If Egypt, *the*

people, their future, the future of interior Africa (not forgetting African slaves), the future of her boundless navigation, of her commerce and railways; if all or any of these are to be considered, what right we ask, before the people, or God, has even the Sultan, as suzerain, which we cannot better? are these men strong enough, or clear enough, to hold the keys of Egypt, of Africa, of Suez, and of the East? God forbid! Already we are practically more the suzerains of Egypt than any one else, and the natural course of events will make us still more so.

Constantinople not being the arena for the fight, time must show whether we can honourably occupy Alexandria, or whether we must be content with defending Suez on the very spot, that is, in the Mediterranean, by forts along the canal, and at Aden and Perim. . Alexandria, with her natural advantages, would afford us every requisite by sea and land, and she communicates

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by railway with Suez; but the point is to defend Suez—in the best way—if we can, if not, in the best practicable way.

Should great powers ever gather here, and avail themselves of the strongest natural ground, namely, the natural fortresses and highlands of Southern Palestine, they must leave those natural fortresses to reach us, or have great fleets, as well as great armies, and at both ends of the Canal; otherwise our troops could pass by rail Indiadwards, from Alexandria to the Red Sea.

The Black Sea although not a *cul de sac*, is likely to lead us no way we ought to go, except for commerce. As a closed sea it stagnates all the life of those regions—as an open sea it is for Russia but simple right and absolute necessity. Russia cannot be expected to strangle herself; nor can the highway between continents and nations be longer treated as a Turkish lake by any civilized international consensus.

*Constantinople and Alexandria.* 35

Towards India, however, Constantinople is the last route that Russia would choose, for it is the longest, the most exposed, the most involved, and the most costly. With *points d'appui* at Ashourada, and Krasnovodsk on the Caspian, and a good, direct, and well-watered road thence to Herat, it were a strange Indian "policy" indeed, for Russia to march round some 1200 miles extra, for the purpose of breaking her communications, hazarding her base of operations, or exposing her columns to flank attacks by sea and land !

If there is a country whose commercial interests are universal, that country is England, and if England have an interest in Constantinople, it is that it should be open to all free uses of commerce and civilization, and become the centre of a vast system of Eastern and Western railways, the carriers of our ideas and our merchandize, by means whereof there

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may be hurled through the shrunken veins of that old world, the blood and the enterprise of the new generation !

Not only, therefore, is the Turkish Eastern question a sham question, but it prevents our listening to and answering the real one ; and it narrows to Turkey and Bulgaria a policy, and a humanity that should have a world-wide scope. Nay, should those cries of anguish that go up from Egypt and Persia, and from Mohammedan, and Indian, as well as from Christian races, be the less listened to, because Humanity is backed in her appeals to us by the interest of our world-involving commerce, and by the very life needs of a policy that is either nothing or imperial ?

Let us revive the ancient glories of Alexandria upon a mightier stage. Let her gather up again the riches of the East and the West, barring the approach of war, and welcoming from all nations the heralds and the ensigns of peace.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE THREE COURSES.

"A regular army can be transported within twenty (seventy) days from the Russian ships to Herat."—PROFESSOR VÁMBÉRY.<sup>1</sup>

"When is the Russian advance to be barred and where? By the Himalayas or by the Indian Ocean? This is a question, not for our grandchildren, nor our children, but for ourselves."—BURNABY'S *Ride to Khiva*.

"The attitude of England towards Russia with regard to Central Asia can hardly be called a dignified one. There are constant questions, &c., but nothing is ever done. It would seem wiser and more dignified to allow the Russians plainly to understand what limit they could not pass in their onward movement." — SCHUYLER'S *Turkistan*.

THE facts upon which this treatise is founded are as plain, as obvious, and as simple as a map

The Professor has mistaken the *distance* from Astrabad to Meshed, but seventy days is a dangerously short period.



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can make them; but in one cardinal instance the map has lately been strangely altered.

The Persian Gulf, Ispahan, the Caspian harbours, the old world route of armies from Persia Indiadwards; the passes of Hindostan; Cabool, Herat, Candahar; the once famed, and again to be famous oasis Merv—all have been always well known to all who wanted to know them. The projects of Russia around the Caspian are, of course, more novel, but were dictated by the selfsame facts of nature. Yet, for ought that appeared until lately, these same great facts had no direct connexion with European politics. Nor did Russia even possess the key to them, for her railway system did not exist. She learnt the value of that at the Crimean War, when whole brigades disappeared on the march, and divisions are said to have started for the field which they never reached. Russia now has railways, and when they are directed towards the frontiers of

civilized countries, her *guage* is different from theirs. Her armies can go out, but theirs cannot come in. It is this railway system that may bring her power to bear on the *réal* route to India. It is the same that, if properly directed, would enable us to be beforehand with her at the goal, or to take her at a disadvantage on her route.

What, then, is it that has transferred like magic the Eastern question from Constantinople to Suez—that for the Black Sea makes us read the Caspian, and for Sebastopol, Ashourada?

The Suez Canal is the key to the riddle of many centuries and of three Continents. It directly affects every part of the Anglo-Indian question. Persia, which was before as practically remote as Japan, is brought by it almost to the gates of the Mediterranean. It should give us practical control of a system of Persian railways connecting Ispahan with India.

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It should give us practical control of their trade. It alters altogether the conditions under which the Anglo-Russian contest for trade, commerce, political influence, civilization—ay, and religion, has to be fought out, and is equivalent to the creation of a first-class power, always bound to promote all our interests in all these respects.

If these things are so, their negative lesson is only of less importance than their positive value. To know what we need not attempt at Constantinople is almost as necessary as to know how to succeed elsewhere. If we waste our resources on a fool's errand in one place, we may have none left for a wise and consummate policy at others. Nay, to succeed at Constantinople may be to fail on the Caspian, and to succeed in such a failure on the Bosphorus might be to fail of success everywhere else.

There are three courses before us, and the one we choose will settle the Anglo-Asian question.

The first course is to do nothing, and that were fatal. The next is, out of nervous dread of Russian advances or intrigues, to annex the western frontier states, or to outrage or alarm the independence of the tribes bordering on that side of India, and that were unnecessary, unavailing, costly, dangerous. The third course is, to observe a certain tentative policy ; to control certain passes and fortresses on our frontier ; to establish friendly relations with, and commerce, trade, railways, and accredited agents in the territory of our neighbours on the border ; to press on Persia a natural and necessary alliance, and accepting the alternative of Turkish dissolution, or of a strong and free state to spring from its ruins, let us take in face of the universe some immutable material guarantee for our unchallenged passage of the Suez Canal.

And let us propound plainly, fairly, and openly to Russia this honest test, and let the nation

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understand it and stand by it. "Pursue your course of civilizing and Russianizing Asia within certain limits, if you will. Take, if you like, even all the territory between the Oxus and the Yaxartes on the North; we will even leave you to settle accounts and to contend for or to reciprocate commerce with whomsoever you may meet further to the North-east of India; *but* South of Khiva and the Oxus, and East of the Caspian let the desert and the mountain remain our common barrier, and the line of the old Oxus bed from Khiva to the Caspian your boundary. Further in these directions you cannot advance without the set purpose of assailing and appropriating the outposts of India, for otherwise no good thing can possibly come to you by advancing across another desert, or over another mountain range, and attaining a fresh point of uncertainty and departure."

Standing thus within our rights and for the

rights of Asia, with communications as short, on stronger lines, and with alliances that must both increase our trade and support our policy, we offer no offence and need suffer none. Having done all, let us stand finally thus for India, for Empire, and for God !

## CHAPTER IV.

## EGYPT, SUEZ, PERSIA.

"By encouraging trade and railways, lending officers to remodel her (Persia's) army, and, above all, pressing her to occupy and maintain her proper northern frontier, we should certainly acquire a predominant influence."

BAKER'S *Clouds in the East*.

"If any difficulty with England ever arise, it will probably be in Persia, and not elsewhere.

"The success of such an expedition (invasion of India) would, of course, depend upon which country had the preponderance in Persia; for it is only with the consent—if not the active co-operation—of Persia, that such a plan would stand the slightest chance of fulfilment.

"The only danger to India from Russia lies through Persia. Experience has proved that all invasions of India have come through Afghanistan, and Afghanistan can only be approached by Russia through Persia."

SCHUYLER'S *Turkistan*.

EGYPT, Suez, and Persia appertain to one line of Anglo-Indian policy, and the surpassing interest

of Persia to this country arises from the fact that the Caspian Sea is by far the best basis of Russian operations against India, and that its southern shores are the northern frontiers of Persia. The value, therefore, of an Anglo-Persian alliance it is difficult exactly to estimate; its possible value it may be difficult to over-estimate. In a country of only some four millions of population, still dwindling through bad government, bad sewage, polygamy, and other causes, whose annual income is controlled by an irresponsible ruler, where education is more general than in other Eastern states, and which lies directly on the path between mighty and jealous empires, it is obvious that great changes are imminent.

Persia is one of those States that must be taken in tutelage by a real power, and the choice lies between Russia and England. She *must* be controlled by one or the other. We are in-



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debted to consular guesses even for an idea of her population, and the most we know for certain of her income is that the Shah disposes of it. The very direction and range of her mountains, rivers, and desert, mark her out as the highway to India, north or south, for Russia or for England, whilst the fertility of her western, and especially of the north-western regions, and the position of her chief towns, naturally suggest a railway connexion, north and south, with the ocean, and so with an inter-continental railway system. To be absorbed by Russia or used by England, seems her manifest destiny; if the former, we make plain the highway for Russia towards the East; if the latter, we menace her advance, make sure of our own, and appropriate all the material advantage of the situation. Persia cannot be neutral.

And the great increase in the value of her alliance since the opening of the Suez Canal, our

strategical command of the waterway of the Euphrates, and also the Tigris as far as Bagdad, whence a railway was projected east and west—our nearness to Ispahan (sixty thousand inhabitants), the probability of a continued line thence by Yezd (forty thousand inhabitants) and Bunder-Abbas to Kurrachee—all these, and many other considerations, should teach us that that alliance is at present extremely desirable, and may sooner than we expect become necessary to both nations.

It is true that the main battle for India must be fought in India by the commerce, railways, civilization, strategy, and policy of India; but Persian politics offer, in one way and another, a connecting element in all the items of our defence or attack.

The resources of Persia have actually been sealed up lest they should be used by the enemy against her. At the base of the mountains which

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mark the old north-western frontier of Persia; lie the rich provinces Ghilan and Mazanderan, utterly neglected, but perhaps the most fertile belt of country in the world. The northern mountain slopes are fringed with valuable forests of teak, oak, walnut, and box; while coal and iron are found on the southern plateau, and forests of orange and lemon trees abound in favourable regions. "Constantly in dread of invasion (says Colonel Baker), either by the Russians, Turks, or Afghans, her roads and lines of communication have purposely been left undeveloped, —the natural result has ensued. Her commerce has dwindled; famine and misgovernment have done their work; and everything tends to ruin and decay; and when Russia, in 1828, turned the Caspian into a Russian lake, not only was Persia prohibited from keeping vessels of war on the Caspian, but she actually was not permitted to trade from her own shores under her own

flag. Consequently the harbours of Enzelli and Ashourada, which would have been so important for this nation's northern maritime trade were rendered useless."

And the vast importance of Ashourada harbour is shown by the fact that "the eastern shore of the Caspian slopes so gradually that vessels cannot lie near the land on account of the shallow draught of water, and the sudden and dangerous gales which spring up in that sea. Hence the difficulty of landing men and supplies, except at Ashourada harbour, where they could be disembarked in any weather. There is no other harbour nearer than Krasnovodsk, where there is a dearth of fresh water."

How are the trade and strategy of Persia and India here involved! How ought not British influence to have prevented such injury and degradation! How readily could British power with a Persian alliance confound intrigues other-

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wise dangerous to both! In fact, as the Suez Canal has created a new strategy, so Russian operations around the Caspian have created a new need for it. The Persian Gulf is now practically as near to us as Constantinople, and it is a thousand miles nearer to what we may have to defend. For the first time in history a real Russian attack against India, and a real defence of it by England have become possible. Persia has now become our natural, and we her necessary ally. For our purposes she may be made far more available than Turkey. Her interests are ours, and ours hers. It is our foe that menaces her trade and frontier, and whilst the latter *confronts and flanks for many miles* Russia's easiest route towards India, the former may become ours, and enable her in return to profit by English built railways and English mail contracts. The Persian Gulf is the English *point d'appui*, Ispahan would be the natural commer-

cial and railway centre of such an alliance, and the Persian mountains its watch-towers and fortresses.

It is requisite in this argument to discount a little the proximate railway future, and various have been the projects of lines from the Mediterranean or Scutari to Bagdad, or further to some Persian centre, from whence to the outworks of India would be but some 1000 easy miles. Such a line must pass through Ispahan, and would have branches to Teheran, to the Gulf, and to the mountains; but whatever line is made will probably be schemed by us, built by us, and commanded by us, *or by Russia*, and whether by her or by us is the real question.

And the want of continuous internal water communication will force Persia to depend on our railways, just as the extraordinary fertility of her northern territory, which can thus alone be connected with the ocean and with a system of free

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interchange, and disconnected with Russian exclusiveness, point to the same conclusion. Further, her Great Central Desert plateau so hinders communication between North and South that the physical or material unity of Persia can only be accomplished by such a railway system as would subserve also her commercial freedom and political independence.

Mohammedanism and the obvious anti-Russian interests of Persia notwithstanding, it seems at present certain that an Anglo-Turkish alliance would rather drive Persia from us than lead her to us. A true view, therefore, of Anglo-Eastern policy would rather help than hinder us with Persia. "All conceivable occasion for dispute," says Professor Vambéry, "is sought with Turkey. The Persian will vote and intrigue against Turkish interests wherever possible." Thus an abandonment of Turkey by us will not only not prejudice but rather serve us at the Court of Teheran,

whereas our championship of Persia would smooth the way to an Afghan alliance whilst holding us up to the fanatical Mussulmen of India as the friends of their nearer brethren and co-religionists.

It is only hopelessness of an English alliance that has involved Iran in the fatal necessity of an alliance with Russia ; for the latter only postpones the destruction of Persia ; the former would be her salvation. Can the Shah rejoice in the reflection that Russian railways now command Persian trade and the Persian capitol ? That on the Caspian, once his lake, he cannot now send out even a fishing-boat ? That Russian projects take as their premiss and very starting-point at Ashourada, his submission and abasement, and his subserviency when they march through Astrabad by Kizil Arvat or Meshed towards Herat ? "That Herat, the rich and golden, where the best cream in Asia flows, and the most beautiful wo-



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men abound, where the fields need but be tilled by children to bear rich fruit ;" that Herat which every Persian ruler in every age has longed for, is but to constitute the key-stone of Russian power and the complement of his own littleness ? That Merv, which Iran possessed thousands of years ago, and which we ought now to establish as against Russia, is marked out by her as the next and necessary victim of her advances ? "

From no point can Persia want a Russian alliance save from that of stupor or despair.

And see how Persian imbecility threatens not only British trade but British strategy :—" Here in England (says Colonel Baker) the mouth of the Attrek is assumed to be the boundary of Russia on the Caspian, and it is understood that the Persians have agreed to admit Russian rights as far inland as the junction of the Attrek with the Simbur, i.e. a part of the old Persian line. But on the spot the Russians have assumed a

right to the Gourgan, and a Persian force cannot now cross the Gourgan. This at once violates the ancient line. Some Russian maps even claim the whole line of the Attrek, and falsely make that river rise near Abiverd instead of near Koochan, thus absorbing parts of several Persian provinces. Moreover, we know that Russia is now planning expeditions against the Tekès, who were not in contact with her at Khiva, and who occupy a part of the old Persian frontier, and that fertile and well-watered part which forms the main road for the march of an army from the Caspian to Herat."

The threefold uses and functions of Persia on our behalf are sufficiently apparent.

Politically she must be made to aid us in a good understanding with the Afghan races, our common neighbours, and with the Mohammedan races of India.

Strategically her real frontier bars the passage

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of Russian troops from the Caspian eastwards. As Russia cannot advance freely by that route, without infringing or destroying the ancient territorial rights of Persia, so it is our interest to maintain them on her behalf.

Commercially (as well as in our strategical and political interests) the line from Ispahan to Yezd and Bunder-Abbas, and thence along the coast to Kurrachee or Karachi, would aid most powerfully to knit together London, Suez, Persia, Beloochistan, and India, and it would be under the absolute control of the mistress of the seas.

The great mineral wealth of Persia with only mule and camel transport, is an item and an instance of how she awaits development.

The Eastern question is therefore for England a Persian as well as an African question, and it cannot be answered or even spelt out at Constantinople. The Turkish Eastern question is a sham Eastern question, and is dominated now

by the real one, amply enough developed. The Suzerainty of Lower Egypt; the Suez Canal; Ispahan as the Anglicised centre of Persian commerce; the whole trade of Central Asia to drift or not to drift by British default into Russian hands; Afghanistan to be closed or opened for British commerce; Merv and Herat, the strategic outworks of a simple certain plan for sapping or establishing our position in that "gigantic fortress," Hindustan, of which the glacis may possibly be held by a power *not* the garrison, and towards which the passes may be occupied by doubtful allies or open foes;—*these* are some of the questions that go to make up that "Eastern" one, of mingled, or hitherto rather mangled, strategy, policy, nationality, and trade,—the vastest perhaps that has ever heretofore been asked upon this globe, and in the answering of which Russian diplomatists have too often brayed the statesmen of the West like fools in a mortar!

## CHAPTER V.

## THE RUSSIAN TRILATERAL.

ASHOURADA, THE BASE;

MERY, THE KEY;

HERAT, THE GATE.

"I feel persuaded that a diversion along the northern frontier of Persia is secretly preparing.—VÁMBÉRY.

"In the Caucasus there is a standing army of 151,161 men, within easy water communication of Ashourade.—BURNABY.

"Should Russia be permitted to annex Kashgar, Balkh, and Merv, India would be liable to attacks from three points, and we should have to divide our small English force."—BURNABY.

"Herat is the true gate to the vestibule of India. This natural route has never been avoided, and never can be."—PROFESSOR VÁMBÉRY.

"Herat has ever—and justly—been considered throughout the East as the key to India."—BAKER'S *Clouds in the East*.

WHETHER we call it the result of Russian progress, or of the will of destiny, or of Peter, it matters

little; but some power has consistently, and hitherto successfully, aimed at curbing English power in the East by eventually absorbing Persia, and establishing Russian authority at Herat and upon the Persian Gulf. Had Russia held, at the time of the Crimean War, her present position on the Yaxartes and the Oxus, and at Ashourada on the Caspian, we should have learnt all the earlier, but too late for our Indian Empire, that the Eastern question was not in Europe. Russia now is well established at Khiva and Ashourada—two angles of the vast trilateral, which, unless we interfere, will be naturally and necessarily completed at Herat, the Gate of Hindostan; and equally natural and necessary, supposing we do not interfere, will soon be her position at Balkh (270 miles from Cabul), as at Herat and Astrabad, and also the consolidation of her Persian-Afghan alliance, and her championship of the Mohammedan race.

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What, then, is England to do ?

Why, first, leave Constantinople alone ; next, consider our nearest base of operations against Russia as removed thence to the Persian Gulf. Then realize that we have to re-establish in Persia the supremacy we nearly gained at the time of Sir Henry Rawlinson's embassy, which we have since disregarded, if we have not spurned, but which Persia is anxious enough to accord. As Professor Vámbéry well says, our policy in Iran "was just as lavish in Malcolm's time in gold and favours as it has been cold and indifferent from M'Neil downwards. The Shah, as well as his ministers, seemed constrained by necessity to receive the Russians as their Mentor. It is from no conviction of a better future that they have cast aside the embraces of the English Lion, and thrown themselves into the arms of the Northern Bear ; and the Shah, whether he likes it or no, has to dance to every tune which

the latter growls to him." When, however, Russia would have to choose between undertaking a march from Astrabad to Meshed with our armies on her flank, or dislodging us from the Persian mountains, or leaving us behind her, knowing that she would find Herat the Gate of India fortified in our interest, and Bolan, its vestibule, protected at Quetta~~X~~—why, then, Russia, I say, would think a great many times before persuading herself that she *had* "the power successfully to attack us in India."

But are we likely soon enough to take these few and necessary steps?

Here is no alarmist or costly policy. It requires but the clear head and the strong will of a popular minister. It requires, before all things, that the subject be ventilated, and Parliament and people well informed on the points at issue.

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I propose to consider briefly, what in relation



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to, Russian strategy Hindustan herself is: what are the three practicable positions and routes for her attack and defence; and whether it is not time now to have done with a Turkish alliance commercially, strategically, and politically bankrupt, and to replace it by a Persian, which may be made profitable in all three senses. I propose to show that we can thus alone act directly upon the only real base of Russian<sup>o</sup> operations against India; that by restoring Ispahan to her former position, making her also a railway and trade centre, we should at once draw and increase the Persian trade, and also establish from the Persian Gulf easy communications with positions whence to menace this grand Russian march towards India in flank, and at our strongest points. The fact is, the Suez Canal has turned the flank of the Turkish alliance and of the Eastern question, and we have but to look at the map to see that Ispahan, whilst close to the Persian Gulf, is less than

half the distance of Constantinople from our Indian frontier, and that one of the shortest as well as the easiest routes by which Russian armies could advance upon India is north-east of the Black Sea, leading thence directly to what I have termed their "real base" at Ashourada on the Caspian. Constantinople is simply *out of the question* of Russo-Indian or Anglo-Indian strategy. For Turkey we can only fight and pay; Persia would open up for us new commercial *entrepôts*, and she cannot fight without fighting our battles.

Hindustan is "a gigantic natural fortress," open to England on the sea, closed on the north and north-east by impregnable mountains, and open to Russian attack only through several practicable passes on the north-west.<sup>1</sup> These passes

<sup>1</sup> I refer to those passes only that are practicable and practical—those which it is reasonable to suppose can be approached in sufficient numbers by armies that can be maintained for a sufficient time, and that would not be confronted by us from too great a distance, through

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are threatened by Russia from two sides—from Khiva on the north-west, and much more seriously from Ashourada on the west, and rather to the north-west of Herat and the Bolan Pass. The danger is lest Russia acquire through our laches moral ascendancy over the Asiatic tribes whose imaginations are inflamed by the *prestige* and paraphernalia of power, and material possession of certain strategic points, which, if undisputed, will soon throw the road to India absolutely open. Our trust and hope is that both moral and material ascendancy will be on the side of England if we take advantage of our opportunities now. I will take the Russian advance by Khiva first, as the less dangerous. Secondly, her attack from Ashourada, her base on the Caspian, and thence obstacles scarcely surmountable, or with too feeble an array. The names of Terek-Davan, Kashgar, &c., &c., suggest only attacks by Russia against us that would have no even chance if we rightly organize our defence and frame our policy.

along the north-eastern Persian boundary. Thirdly, our line of approach by Suez and the Persian Gulf to Ispahan, as possibly the heart of the Eastern question, and the point where victory or defeat may await us.

From Khiva to the passes of Hindustan there are but three steps, long ones doubtless, but each strategically depending on and connected with the other, and Russia has just seized the position from which the first step has to be taken. The first step is from Khiva to Merv or Marv;<sup>2</sup> the second, from Merv to Herat; the third, from Herat to the Bolan Pass. Herat is the Gate of India, and but 470 and 590 miles from Quetta~~X~~ and Kabul respectively; Merv is the key to Herat,

<sup>2</sup> In Keith Johnston's *Indian Atlas* there is a piquant note to the effect that names are very curious things in these regions. A syllable entering into many names is spelt a dozen different ways; and often the quarter-masters of regiments could not make out a single name on the route given them by their officers.

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from, which it is but 240 miles distant; in Khiva Russia hopes to have found the key to Merv, from which it is about 300 miles, and she has undoubtedly done so, if we go on dreaming of false Eastern questions and disregarding the real one. Merv has a fine climate and extraordinary fertility. It comprises an oasis of ninety miles in circumference, rejoices in three crops in a year, and once possessed a million population. It has water communication with Herat, nearly complete by the Moorghab river, which rises near Herat, passing through Merv and 100 miles beyond. The oasis of Merv is only 140 miles from the banks of the Oxus, and Khiva is on the Oxus.

Taking again these "steps" in the reverse, and beginning from the Indian frontier, we find that Cabul covers from the west the famous Khiber Pass and Peshawur; we find also that Quetta~~x~~ covers the Bolan Pass from the west,

and virtually commands Beloochistan and Afghanistan; we have now a treaty right to occupy Quetta~~X~~, but if we wish peace we must occupy it before Russia reaches Merv, and let Russia understand that any move of hers on Merv might, could, and would be met on our part by a representation that we should be compelled to move on Herat.

But Quetta~~X~~ virtually commands Candahar, which with Herat and Caubul (or Kabul) forms a trilateral of strategy. Herat is on the western angle, Cabool on the eastern, and Candahar on the southern. From the first to the second there is no road, without traversing intricate mountain passes to the north, or through plains south to the third (Candahar), which last is thus important because it closes the road between East and West Afghanistan, as well as the advance from Herat to Quetta~~X~~.

The next move virtually settles the Central

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Asian question. We know how for many years the great Russian departments of geography, policy, and strategy, have virtually overridden the Russian government, if they have not constituted in those regions the virtual Russian government, and we all know how lately those departments have, in the matter of Khiva, actually overridden Russian honour. The great chain of Persian mountains south and east of the Caspian, joins the Hindoo Koosh in Afghanistan, and it is our duty and within our power to guard by proper alliances that great sea of desert which extends from the Caspian to Balkh, and now isolates Russia from Herat and India. The small republics in these regions would supply 100,000 magnificent irregular cavalry. They are ready to rally on us, and have even made overtures to Persia, but on some settled power they must rally and rest, and that power can only be ourselves or Russia. Our dislike of annexation

has made Southern Asia friendly, but Russia must not be feared more than we. Trade, roads, and rails should be our watchwords; a railway through Bolan to Qu<sup>e</sup>itta and to Herat, with a branch from Candahar to Cabool, should be looked forward to as the means of anticipating Russia's force and influence. Our moral force would then become immense; we should occupy the passes belonging to us, encourage commerce, maintain the independence of Afghanistan and Beloochistan, and there we could leave the matter, unless Russia advanced to Merv, a step thus rendered extremely unlikely.

That Herat is the gate, and Merv the key, to India is proved by the position and character of those places. That they are so regarded by Russia is proved by the map and by Russian deeds. The following is partly condensed from Professor Vámbéry's work on Central Asia:—

“I venture to designate Herat as the gate of



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Central Asia, simply from personal experience and actual evidence that the city on the Heri-Rud forms, on the one side, towards the bank of the Oxus, the true gate to the vestibule of Turkistan, by which I mean the northern chain of the Paropamisus range, and the Khanates of Meimene and Andchoi; and, on the other, the true gate to the vestibule of India, by which I mean Afghanistan. Any one who has passed Herat on the way from, or to Bokhara, will have perceived this for himself. The natives say that God chose Herat as a resting-place both for those who are hastening to the toils of burning India and for those who are passing on to the torments of rude Turkistan. Even in past centuries, as the ruins of caravanseras sufficiently testify, the road lay in its present direction.

“Herat has ever been a mighty emporium for the commercial relations of Persia and India. When the gates of Herat are closed, *trade on the*

*Indus*, in Bokhara, and in *Ispahan* will stagnate. To pass Merv is impossible, or, at any rate, most unpleasant, not only on account of the predatory Turkomans, but also of the barren steppes; and I can well understand how at the time of the last siege of Herat by Dost Mohammed, caravans preferred to endure a quarantine of two years at Meshed than by evading Herat to choose another route. The Orientals have always known this city as possessing the characteristics we have denoted, as is proved by ~~the~~ more than fifty sieges Herat has had to endure on account of the desire for conquest with which it has inspired sometimes India and sometimes Central Asia.

“English diplomatists will be utterly astonished to find in what a short time a Russian force landed at Astrabad from Ashourada can repair to Herat.

“England must retain Herat, of course in accordance with the Afghans. The two high-

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ways, both from the north and north-west, leading to the southern Hilmend and Indus intersect each other here, for the road through Kabul is dangerous and but rarely taken. As the Persian and Central Asiatic merchant trading to India and Afghanistan rests at Herat and considers it as the cross road for caravans, so the army marching from the Oxus or the Caspian must halt here also. This natural route has never been avoided, and can never be so. The Eastern outlet would lead the traveller into the rude Hezera mountains; the Western into the inhospitable districts of Siistan. For any one proceeding from north to south nothing therefore is left but to take the old highway, trodden for centuries by caravans, freebooters, and conquerors, which has its starting point at Herat.

Herat is surrounded on all sides by nomadic tribes, of whom its possessors can, by a wise policy, obtain many thousands by making their

chiefs his vassals. Owing to the richness of the soil, Herat would maintain a great—ay, a very great—army, and has done so.

“Taking for granted that an English garrison, with the consent of Afghanistan, accepts here the position of boundary guard—the management of a town consisting of heterogeneous elements, and of a district accustomed to foreign rule, will be an easy task for England, and the semblance of brief British rule of 1838 has not only not been forgotten at Herat, but even the most hostile Mohammedan extols this epoch as the happiest he remembers; and English rule would find here more support, or, at any rate, would meet with less ill-will than in many parts of the Punjaub and of fanatical Bengal, and Herat is worth a sacrifice. I feel persuaded that a diversion along the northern frontier of Persia is secretly preparing.”

Russia has now secured a definitive frontier at

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Khiva, as she has on the Caspian; and if she is really content to work for civilization and order in Central Asia, she must work within these lines. To go beyond them is to attempt alliances, or to threaten strategic positions which belong to our Indian defences, and which can do Russia no good, unless she mean to attack us there. The old bed of the Oxus, therefore, lying between Khiva and the Caspian should be her utmost boundary there, and might be a natural and peaceful one, having the desert of Khiva, or Kara Kum, between Khiva and Merv. Further north, between the Oxus and the Yaxartes, or even descending to Kashgar, Russia may follow her natural impulses for ascendancy or commerce; besides, she will there not only encounter great natural obstructions, but the jealousy and opposition of the Chinese Empire, and we neither can nor need do much to say her nay,<sup>s</sup> although our

<sup>s</sup> "The position of Russian affairs in Turkistan is

Indian Government sh  
for its taxpayers equal  
their share of the trade

And should Russia  
and threaten us from  
or Herat, she can be m  
be met at all, by rail  
as well as to Herat.  
from Balkh *via* Orenbu  
of from Ashourada a  
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tions, and the intervening  
Turkistan and India, whic  
ment exceedingly difficult, i

## CHAPTER VI.

JOHN BULL: HIS SHOP.

"Railways would completely obviate those difficulties of transport, supply, and want of water, upon which the security of India from attack now depends."—*BAKER's Clouds in the East.*

"Two years ago the English nearly inveigled the Shah into a treaty with Baron Reuter, and that would have given them the control of the whole of Persia; but, thank goodness, our people checkmated them there. Strausberg is a joke to that fellow Reuter."—"A Russian Diplomatist : " see *BURNABY's Ride.*

"Herat has ever been a mighty emporium for the commercial relations of Persia and India. When the gates of Herat are closed, trade on the Indus, in Bokhara, and in Ispahan will stagnate."—*PROFESSOR VÁMBÉRY.*

"We have no consular agents in any of the towns through which these troops would have to march on their road to Turkistan."—*BURNABY.*

THIS chapter but suggests some of the results of stagnation of trade following impolicy. Look at the comparative blank our national ledger exhibits in respect of the teeming myriads

from the Tyrol to the Indus, with all of whom we have more or less intermeddled; for most of whom we have fought, paid, and protocolled; for whose integrity, autonomy, or government, we have been intimately concerned these hundred years.

Now that another epoch arises, are we prepared to profit by the special advantages, as well as to suffer from the special disadvantages it brings with it? When Eastern products went round the Cape, London was their warehouse and we their factors. Now that they issue through the Canal, at the opposite corner of Europe, we must lose some of the carrying trade and some of the redistribution. Are we, then, using the advantages that same Canal proffers us, from Suez to Kurrachi? and are we thinking anything of the statesmanship of trade, as well as of the statesmanship of empire, in the Turkish and Egyptian imbroglios?



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Hitherto our national desire has apparently been to lose as much treasure, trade, and life as possible in and about and around those regions, and we have fought, preached, prayed, taxed, and intrigued, as though our object were to injure the recuperative energies of Turkey and to mortgage Egypt so deeply as to have to take to the estate in order to pay ourselves a dividend!

As to Persian trade, paltry and undeveloped as it now is, our action or inaction, instead of encouraging it to seek the free and universal ocean, has left it to the narrow channels of Russian inland monopoly. Persian trade might have been English strategy, instead of which Russia has been permitted, and almost encouraged, to forge them both into one complete and formidable system, fit to feed and fortify her basis of attack against Persia and India.

In Afghanistan and Beloochistan English trade and Englishmen have been consistently

discouraged by English policy, for fear, perhaps, of "complications," and for avoidance of responsibility.

Everywhere unbusiness-like isolation or unbusiness-like intervention has been the rule, but now intercourse on sound principles is the very condition of our existence as a conquering progressive State.

Public and official opinion has made great strides, although still lagging behind the urgency of fact. In the matter of communication we want three things—1st, The swiftest passage by rail between London and India; 2ndly, Persian and Perso-Indian lines for local traffic and strategic purposes; 3rdly, Swift and safe goods' traffic between England and the East.

The first can only be attained in consonance with our interests by a line continued from Scutari *viâ* Bagdad, Ispahan, and Yezd, to Kurachi, and must of necessity be subject to

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interruption in time of war. The second scheme is part of the first, but need fear no interruption, for it will be under our control. The third is guaranteed by the Suez Canal.

The position is very much simplified and defined at the same time that stronger motives are brought to bear for completion of the system. From London to Persia or India there is now a straightforward passage without re-embarkation, and we remain throughout on our own territory—the decks of our naval and commercial marine; whilst for swift traffic there is the intercontinental project with the half-way houses of Bagdad and Ispahan. What we want now is the line from Scutari to Kurachi.

Only a few years since Colonel Chesney's project of a Euphrates line met with a cold reception, but since then our own Government and the press of England and India took far greater interest in a project of 5311 miles. Parliament

sent out a Committee, plans came in, and estimates to 41,600,000*l.* The journey—from the banks of the Thames to the shores of the Hooghli—was to be shortened from four weeks to seven days, thirteen hours and twenty-two minutes.

Having now short, direct, and safe communication with Persia and India, no Power but Russia has any object in opposing the Scutari-Bagdad scheme, which may be left to the natural development of Constantinople as freed from Turkish incubus.

The Canal makes far easier the problem of railway communication in the East, for it should give an impregnable basis to start from, and show us how to command the railway system which will command the East. Strategical and commercial preponderance in Asia will rest with the Power that first completes its railway system.

“It is well at once to discard the idea that railways would be unpopular in the wild countries

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which intervene. The advantage of railways is now well known amongst the wildest tribes of the East. They have exaggerated reports of the riches and facilities of trade which follow in their train, and lament the want of money and resources which prevent their introduction. With this state of feeling existing, and with Russia anxious to push her lines of communication towards the East, the construction of railways is only a matter of time. Assuming this to be the case, there arises a great strategical question which has apparently hitherto been much omitted in the consideration of future eventualities beyond our own borders, and yet upon which the whole future must hinge, viz. guage. For railways would completely obviate those difficulties of transport, supply, and want of water, upon which the security of India from attack now depends. But, for the concentration and supply of large bodies of men, a plentiful rolling stock is abso-

lutely requisite, and a break of gauge at once neutralizes this supply. Russia, and Russia only, has foreseen this difficulty.”<sup>1</sup>

Wherever civilization is there must railways be, and a continuous line is only a question of time.

The Caspian, a Russian lake, is the fundamental fact of the Eastern question, for there Russian influences concentrate and thence they are meant to radiate. Railways, commerce, and strategy are the weapons which Russia wields, and some of them she has actually picked up after we have flung them from us in stupor or in ignorance of their issues. There is now a continuous rail from St. Petersburg to Vladikavhas, in the Caucasus, and thence (constructing in the past year) onwards to Tiflis, between the Black Sea and the Caspian, and to be continued to Erivan, with a concession just made to extend to Tabreez, the largest town in Persia. This scheme will

<sup>1</sup> Baker's *Clouds in the East*.

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take the whole land trade through Russia and from Turkey, and place Persia at the mercy of Russia in case of war. It has been opposed by a Turkish scheme commenced at Scutari, to extend to Ismed and Angora, and by Sivas and Mosul, down the Tigris Valley to Bagdad. There was also a gigantic concession to Reuter, which would have placed Persia under British influence and checked Russian advances there, but our Government opposed it, and it remains in abeyance.

The Caspian will thus soon be directly connected with the whole Russian system. Ashourada commands the richest belt of country in the world, the Caspian Sea, and the only direct routes thence to Herat, whilst from Krasnovodsk, a splendid harbour, there are easy gradients from the eastern shore of the Caspian along the ancient bed of the Oxus, a position which may confer on Russia the strategical and commercial command of Western Central Asia. Large armies have

often traversed the road from Meshed to Herat. There are plentiful water supplies and easy routes along the Attrek from Ashourada *via* Kisil Arvat to the north, or Koochan and Meshed, to the south, and a third and more difficult route to Meshed by Subsawar. Even from Tabreez and Teheran to Herat there are no engineering difficulties. The world is busy with projects for connecting Persia and the East, and when we consider that from Teheran to the Gate of India is only some six hundred miles we should be astonished were it not so. The only question is, Who is to hold the key, and therefore who is to construct the railways? For us, with Suez in our grasp, railways and ships are the whole Eastern question.

The best scheme for us has also the fewest engineering difficulties: make Ispahan a railway centre, with branches to Bagdad, Teheran, and to the coast, we can command this line from the sea, and whether the Turkish project from Scutari to



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Bagdad be carried out or not (thus connecting Calais with Ispahan), we should draw the trade to Ispahan, and from Ispahan to our ships and rails. Ispahan would recover its old position as chief town of the Persian empire, and the capitol would then be far removed from the Russian frontier, whilst close to our own base of operations. The disastrous effect of Russian influence on our commerce is as certain as it is generally unknown.

Take Persia. Some twenty years ago European manufactures arrived in numerous caravans either from Trebizond, through Tabreez or through Bagdad, or from Bombay, through Bushir and Ispahan. This traffic has nearly ceased, and the Russian commercial highway to Persia, through Poti, Tiflis, and Tabris, now carries Russian sugar, cloth, leather, iron, bran, porcelain, glass, and paper, in spite of their inferior quality, and constitutes Russia the commercial conqueror.

Or take East Turkistan. Those who have read the "Central Asia" of Professor Vámbéry know the effect in favour of Russia of the Kashgar Commercial Treaty of May, 1872, and English tax-paying merchants should note them well, for it has inflicted a blow on them as well as on England's political *prestige*. Russian advances, indeed, affect our commerce in all the three Khanates and in Afghanistan. Formerly there had been a comparatively vigorous caravan traffic between the north-west commercial towns of India and the chief markets of Central Asia. Cottons, muslins, silks, cloth, and iron goods were then sent from India through Kabul and Kandahar, and any man who chooses to compare the commercial returns from the Punjaub then and now will see the difference.

There is also the question of the revival by Russian power, and in Russian interests, of the great old commercial highway from the interior

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of China to the west, which was in a flourishing condition up to the end of the middle ages. If for centuries Chinese products were conveyed into Europe through Komul, Kashgar, Samarkand, Balkh, Tabris, and Constantinople, why should not we trade there too? Why should not we get some reciprocal benefit for the 500,000*l.* yearly paid for Turfan wool, or why should not our Himalayan tea find an easy and certain market in East Turkistan and in the Six cities?

As for our shopkeeping in India, let but Imperial policy support and ratify the results of the vast beneficent energies of the services there, and there will not be much the matter. We are far, indeed, from the time when Burke declared that the East India Company was "a State in the disguise of a merchant" no better than he should be—that "whereas thousands of reservoirs in India were the monuments of *real* kings, the fathers of their people, the grand sepulchres built by

the ambition of an insatiable benevolence,—we had everywhere allowed those reservoirs to fall into decay: that throughout a vast country, where not a man eats a mouthful of rice but by permission of the Company, we had emptied and embowelled it with so accomplished a dissolution, that those poor honest and laborious hands were never lifted up to their mouths but with a scanty supply of provisions;—that every other conqueror had left some monument, but, were we driven out of India to-day, nothing would remain to tell that it had been possessed during our dominion by anything better than the ouran-outang or the tiger.”

*Ours* now (always excepting the opium traffic) is the ambition of an insatiable benevolence; and, as to the churches, hospitals, palaces, schools, bridges, roads, canals, and reservoirs, which Burke said we had not built, founded, cut, or digged—why it sounds rather like a descrip-

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tion of what we *have* than of what we have *not* done—as the Indian knows, and as the Russian would find out to his cost, if he went to see.

## CHAPTER VII.

## PUBLIC OPINION.

"When that (the occupation of Merv) is accomplished. it is equally certain that England will lose her *prestige*, and must have recourse to an expedient after the fashion of a Chinese wall on the Indus to maintain her supremacy in India . . . through England herself allowing a most powerful invader to take possession of the threshold of the house, and then telling the inmates to take care of themselves.

"Lord Granville's policy in fortifying Afghanistan on one side only (thus opening a passage to Russia by way of Merv) is like building a house with three walls and leaving the gable open to adventurers."—"An Afghan Prince:" BURNABY'S *Ride*, &c.

PUBLIC opinion on the Eastern question has necessarily been vague and variable, for it has had ignorance for its guide, and zeal for its

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charioteer. It will, however, inevitably settle down safely upon the broad basis of facts recently furnished. The Eastern question therefore appears full of anomalies. It is an anomaly that Russia should be accused of coveting a bad base of operations against our Indian Empire, when she already possesses a good one; and it is an anomaly that that coveted base should be supposed to be Constantinople, when the real basis already exists\* and is secured on the Caspian, 1200 miles further east. It is an anomaly that we should be told of the "immense spaces" which turn into drivel any fancied project of attack by Russia against India, whilst these accurate "judges of distance" first assume the theory that Russia will go back 1200 miles from the Caspian to Constantinople for her basis of attack, and then ignore the fact that from the Caspian to the Gate of Hindustan is only some 600 miles; nothing stands in their imagination

for 1200 miles, and everything is made of 600. It is an anomaly that Russia is supposed to be only occupying "forts in the desert," whilst she is along the edge of one of the richest belts of country in the world. It is an anomaly that a desert has been created (on paper) which does not exist, and that an easy route with plentiful water supplies has been obliterated (from paper), although fit for large armies to traverse, and actually traversed by them. It is an anomaly that whilst Russia commands the only direct route from the Caspian to Herat, she is supposed to be vaguely striking at India, and hopelessly struggling with an immensity of sand. It is an anomaly that a Turkish alliance has been held up as a necessary infamy, or as a to be coveted glory, and connected with the Anglo-Eastern question, when it has directly nothing to do with it; when its flank has been turned by the Suez Canal and by north-eastern Russian railways, and



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when our obvious base of operations is the Persian Gulf, Ispahan, and a Persian alliance.

And there is this crowning anomaly, that whilst the British public oscillates between an undefined dread and an unjustifiable contempt of her antagonist's designs (both based on supreme ignorance of facts), there exist apparently in the chaotic sublimity of our parliamentary system, so few statesmen, recognized as such, who have studied the question, and possess adequate technical knowledge of it, and can lead public opinion into the proper channels; either permanent officials with knowledge are themselves unknown, or else, if eminent, our system of parliamentary majorities soon shifts them from their seats. For the sands of uninformed public opinion are less stable, but more real than those sands of the desert which are expected to overwhelm the projects and the armies of our foe. In a word, we are governed by public opinion,

or not governed at all, and on this subject no public opinion exists, and few men appear to exist who can create one—until on the eve of a disaster or on the morrow of a defeat.

In some sense we are an empire without imperialists, for the imperial Englishmen we can boast of in our imperial parliament, have no representative status, although their genius and energies may have stamped them with an imperial character. We are absolutely without any system of imperial representation, and are dependent for the ideas, the courage, and the purity of statesmanship, upon our natural great men, and on our common people.

“The parliament of Great Britain (said Burke), sits at the head of her extended empire in two capacities:—one, as the local legislature of this island; the other, and I think her nobler capacity, is what I call her imperial character, in which, *as from the throne of heaven, she super-*

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intends all the several inferior legislatures, and guides and controls them all without annihilating any."

Nor in discussing projects which have so much to do not only with India, but with our whole future, can we well forget the part which Suez, ay, and the Nile herself, has to play as between Australia and England. It may not be long, certainly it ought not to be long, ere delegates or deputies, or representatives from Australia, constantly pass and repass by the Mediterranean to the Imperial centre. This is, of course, no reason for annexation or conquest, but as an illustration of the more than imperial nature of English interest and power, it is pertinent to reflect that merchants, legislators, and soldiers, alike cosmopolitan and English, will soon find Suez and the Nile Valley their natural routes. As men take the London and Brindisi line for Alexandria, so they may ere long take the Zanzibar and Cairo

route for the same place. The Nile will be as much an English thoroughfare as Piccadilly, and as little tolerant of toll-bars, or of those who set them up.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CONCLUSIONS.

“At the present moment Great Britain, without any European ally, could drive Russia out of Central Asia. If we allow her to keep on advancing, the same arms which we might now employ, will one day be turned against ourselves.”—CAPTAIN BURNABY.

It is a truth as old as the hills and rivers that originated it, that not only do they sometimes oppose and sometimes facilitate the movements and intercourse of mankind, but that there is throughout human history a certain relation between the progress and destiny of given races and nations, and the period, “the psychological moment,” when they become able to surmount

the obstacles and utilise the characteristics of mountain, climate, river, or sea.

And amongst the greatest world-historical facts is the material, moral, social, and political preparedness or otherwise of the race that is able to dominate a country, whose natural features lead men on from zone to zone and climate to climate.

Of the *conflict* between the powers of nature and human nature, the mountains that run from Biscay to China, are the most conspicuous instances, and at certain epochs have done much to confine the race within certain similar zones and parallels.

Of the *correspondence* between these powers, the Mississippi, the Nile, and now the Suez Canal, present the most striking instances. They tend to remove or to defy barriers of race, nationality, and climate, and bring mankind together from the ends of the earth.

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Thus, whilst such facts have always been the basis of mere military strategy, there is a mightier strategy yet which sets at naught their obstructive power, and ordains that they shall no longer protect barbarians from civilization, or civilization from barbarism. One such period occurs now, and the history of mankind once more translates the hieroglyphics of God.

Russia has done and does her utmost to seize the openings which science and nature offer to her. Hers is one destiny, ours is another and a mightier. We have still greater opportunities for Asia and Australia, and must make the most of them, or take the consequences.

Russian projects are not yet too far matured, but they are surely foreshadowed and already have a very substantial outline. For us Persian and English interests are as absolutely one as those of any two empires on the face of the globe,

for those interests coincide whether in defence or attack, or in peaceful commercial intercourse.

It appears the natural destiny of Russia to control Central Asia as far South as the Caspian, and East as far as the Yaxartes and the Oxus reach, and all that is between them. But the desert and the mountains *protect* Merv, Kandahar, and Bolan. Except from the Persian side, it is as unnatural and hard for Russia to annex these bulwarks as it is natural for her to appropriate the others.

By means of a Persian and Afghan alliance and Persian and Afghan interests; by possession of the frontier Indian passes; by our railways and trade; by our moderate and fair policy and free institutions, we may at least maintain everything between the Oxus and the Indus in a friendly neutrality. Accredited English agents, consuls, or diplomatists should reside at the important



stations, to report facts, to consolidate friendships, and to complete all that is necessary to an intelligent and resolute policy.

Baffled at Herat, as an English railway there in connexion with India can alone baffle her, Russia may seek to form another basis, and to concentrate at Balkh, and M. Lesseps has made preliminary surveys with a view of continuing a line by the Oxus eastward. The great trilateral of Russian strategy and ambition may therefore threaten us at Balkh, 270 miles from Caubul, instead of from Merv, 240 miles from Herat. In either case our armour will be complete enough if riveted with railway iron.

Nor can I here refrain from a summary of a remarkable conversation held by Colonel Baker with Alayar Khan, Governor of Mahomedbad:—"There are only two powers in Asia—England and Russia (said the Governor). Whatever you may say or think, there is not a bazaar

in Hindostan that would not believe that your rule had departed if Herat fell into Russian hands. Ten thousand Russians could march from Kizil Arvat to Kandahar. You talk of an Afghan frontier. Sometimes it is here, sometimes there. It depends upon who rules at Herat or Caubul."

And the Anglo-Indian policy, which common sense would dictate is so plain and manifest; is so obvious upon the face of the facts and of the map; is the subject of such a consensus of informed opinion; and, finally, is now so completely ratified and complemented by the obvious consequences and results of the Suez Canal, that I may be pardoned for urging once more with increasing certainty and earnestness that which, as far as facts went, has been often urged before,<sup>1</sup> and which now only receives its last confirmation:—

<sup>1</sup> And with vast ability, by Baker (in his *Clouds in the East*), who addressed himself to the complete question as it was, and impresses one with some of the best qualities of traveller, soldier, and statesman.

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1st. Considering that the aggressive mania of 1837 and the helpless inaction since are both equally bad, let us avoid all acquisitions beyond the true Hindustan, but get real possession of the passes.

2ndly. England must be able to concentrate at Ispahan and Herat. At both we could well supply armies; the former should be in immediate railway communication with the Persian Gulf, the latter with India.

3rdly. Acquire influence over the tribes of Southern Asia, whilst maintaining strictly their independence. That influence depends on railways, trade, and constant intercourse, and a fearless but moderate policy. It would enable us at once to dissolve barbaric barriers existing against ourselves, and to establish those of civilization against Russia.

4thly. The immense material for native irregular cavalry will be used on the one side or the

other to attack communications and destroy supplies. We have at present ample means of conciliating and commanding them. Russia at present has none. Shall we wait until she has acquired them? Shall we postpone also the reorganization of our Indian army as to artillery, additional officers, infantry reserves, and horses, until they are actually wanted in the field?

5thly. We must command the Mediterranean entrance to the Suez Canal by a first-class port and fortress, else we imperil our whole strategy in Europe and Asia; and neither Crete nor any other place can vie with Alexandria. Crete would have to pass from the same hands: it is not so close upon our great thoroughfare; it is not, nor can it become a mighty entrepôt between three continents and a fourth; it can, of course, have no land or railway communication with Egypt or the East; it can give us no direct command over or communication with the people of

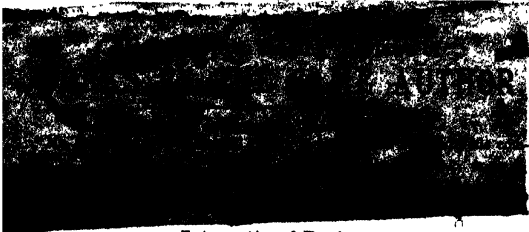
Africa, or with those "African Sepoys" whom, in case of need, we should officer and train by the tens of thousands to fight our battles and theirs for a regenerated continent. Finally, if we do not occupy and fortify Alexandria, an enemy may. What then would be the use of Crete in our hands, with its back towards Egypt, and its wonderful port looking towards the gates of the Black Sea?

Doubtless Russia looks and must look upon Constantinople as the "front door of her house,"—any one admitted behind it can only lack the power to search and sap many corners of Muscovite policy, take in reverse many of her approaches, and confound and unravel many of her designs. We, however, only want to let Russia alone. We are strong enough to stand on our own ground, and just enough to be trusted to stand with our allies on theirs.

In men and money both we are stronger than

Russia, and can afford to be just, but cannot afford to be irresolute. The reservoir of population on which we can draw is, compared to that of Russia, as 235,000,000 to 90,000,000. As to money, the contrast is superlative and superfluous; and our railways, our character, our fortresses, and the desert itself, would fight against Russia, unless we first make a present to her of most of these advantages.

THE END.



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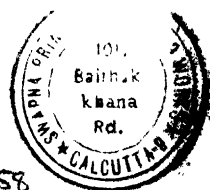
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14.8.58

